

HOPE, DIGNITY, LOVE ... it must be HOSPICE



January 8, 2018

Of Garrett County, Inc.

Maryland Health Care Commission
Paul Parker, Director Commission's Center For Health Care
Facilities Planning & Development
4160 Patterson Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21215

Dear Mr. Parker:

I am writing on behalf of Hospice of Garrett County, Inc. and in response to the questionnaire regarding the Maryland Health Commission certificate of need (CON) programs. We would like to inform the Maryland Health Care Commission that we feel that current regulation of hospice service should be maintained in its current form. We feel there would be no benefit to the public or health care delivery from more competition.

Realizing that our hospice is quite unique compared to any other in Maryland, Hospice of Garrett County, Inc. provides excellent care for the terminally ill in Garrett County. Comparably we are small and must receive a great deal of public support to survive financially. Last year over 25% of our budget was from public support such as fundraising, memorials and donations. Since there is little to no market incentive for hospice providers to offer services in remote or sparsely populated areas such as Garrett County and since we survive by virtue of strong community and financial support, any growth in additional hospice agencies would dilute the resources available to our existing programs and adversely impact our ability to provide high quality service.

We continue to maintain a professional staff no matter how many patients we serve. We are the only hospice in Garrett County; being incorporated in 1983, serving the patients and their families as a volunteer hospice until October 1995. At that time we became Medicare Certified and began doing total home health care for our terminally ill patients.

Although Garrett County is the second largest county in Maryland with land mass (662 square miles) we are quite small in population:

2017 Estimated Population:	29,425
2010 Census Population:	30,097
2000 Census Population:	29,840

We operate with three full-time nurses, one part-time nurse, two full-time certified nursing aides and one part-time aide-serving the county 24/7. In addition, we have great resources to hire from, including a new nursing program at Garrett College and we have been teamed up with the nursing program at Allegany College for years, working with their internship program. We pull additional resources from the National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization and our Relias training programs. Our bereavement services reach out to the community for 13 months after the death of a loved one. We support both hospice families and community referrals. Our devoted patient volunteers serve along with other auxiliary and office volunteers logging hundreds of hours.

Our current daily census is twenty- two patients and we have the flexibility to take on an increased patient level or scale back to less than ten patients, as we are accustomed to from time to time. In 2017 our yearly census was 105 patients. Our county also maintains a large Amish community, from which we get no reimbursement whatsoever. In addition, with the new local cancer center at Garrett Regional Medical Center, patients are engaging in treatment longer, making for reduced days on our program.

We feel that the CON regulation of general hospice services, should, in general, be maintained in its current form.

At the last State inspection, the Maryland State surveyors that performed our evaluations were impressed with our agency and stated "This is the way hospices should operate!" We feel that we provide the needs of Garrett County citizens and saturating the county with additional agencies would only weaken the strongest of organizations to the point when services would be diminished.

We are proud to say since our inception in 1983 no family has received a bill for services or supplies rendered by Hospice of Garrett County, Inc.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna Brenneman", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Donna Brenneman
Hospice of Garrett Co., Inc.